TISÁYAC OF THE YOSEMITE

M·B·M·TOLAND

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A CERTAIN Totókonula was once chief of the people here; a mighty hunter and a good husbandman, his tribe never wanted food while he attended to their welfare. But a change came: while out hunting one day the young man met a spirit-maid, the guardian angel of the valley, the beautiful Tisáyac. She was not as the dusky beauties of his tribe, but white and fair, with rolling yellow tresses, that fell over her shoulders like sunshine, and blue eyes with a light in them like the sky where the sun goes down; white, cloud-like wings were folded behind her shoulders, and her voice was sweeter than the song of birds; no wonder the strong chief loved her with a mad and instant love. He reached towards her, but the snowy wings lifted her above his sight, and he stood again alone upon the dome where she had been. No more Totókonúla led in the chase, or heeded the crops in the valley; he wandered here and there like a man distraught, ever seeking that wonderful shining vision that had made all else on earth stale and unprofitable in his sight. The land began to languish, missing the industrious directing hand that had tended it so long; the pleasant garden became a wilderness, where the drought laid waste, and the wild beast spoiled what was left and taught his cubs to divide the prey. When the fair spirit returned at last to visit her valley, she wept to see the desolation, and she knelt upon the dome, praying to the Great Spirit for succor. God heard, and

stooping from his place, he clothed the dome upon which she stood, and the granite was riven beneath her feet, and the melted snows of the Nevadas rushed through the gorge, bearing fertility upon their cool bosoms. A beautiful lake was formed between the cloven walls of the mountain, and a river issued from it to feed the valley forever. Then sang the birds as of old, laving their bodies in the water, and the odor of flowers rose like a pleasant incense, and the trees put forth their buds, and the corn shot up beneath the sun and rustled when the breeze crept through the tall stalks. Tisáyac moved away as she had come, and none knew whither she went; but the people called the dome by her name, as it is indeed known to this day. After her departure the chief returned from his weary quest, and as he heard that the winged one had visited the valley, the old madness crept up into his eyes and entered, seven times worse than at first, into his empty soul. He turned his back on the lodges of his people. His last act was to cut with his hunting-knife the outline of his face upon a lofty rock, so that if he never returned his memorial at least should remain with them forever. He never did return from that hopeless search; but the graven rock was called Totókonúla, after his name, and may be still seen, three thousand feet high, guarding the entrance of the beautiful valley.—"Native Races," by H. H. Bancroft, page 125, Vol. III.

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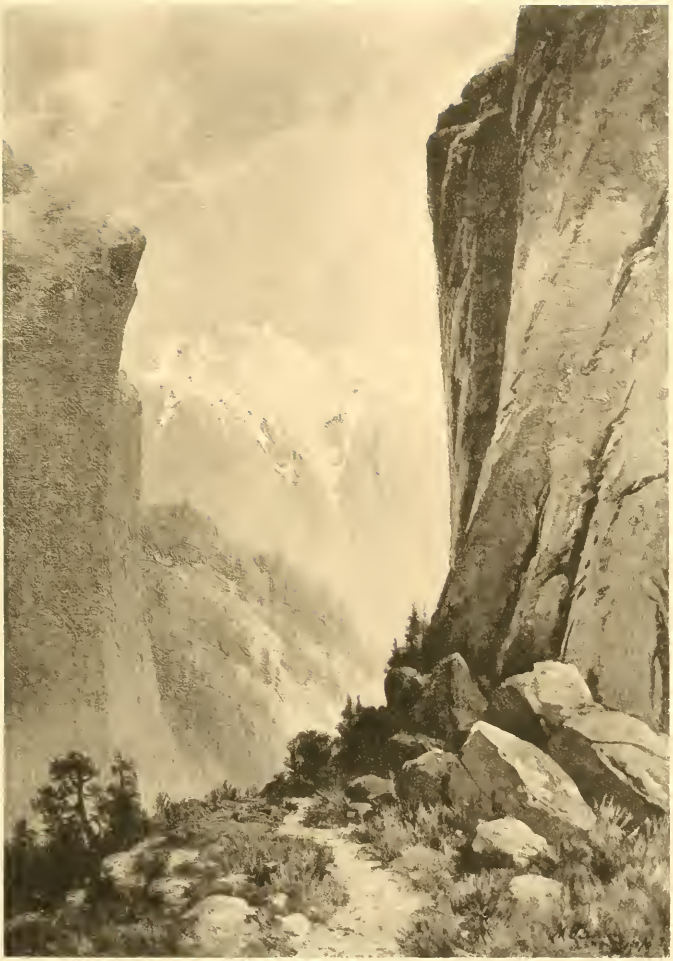

TISÁYAC OF THE YOSEMITE.

I.

Once the Sierra range, rock riven,
Craggy with jagged boulders gray,
Looked like wall borders touching heaven,
That led along their lofty way.
The grand old glaciers extended,
Majestic peaks of frigid will,
Against midsummer sun defended
Their right to wear ice armor still.
O'er the steep slopes were wild woods, dotted
On fluted ridges of the pass,
Where climbed the zigzag trails allotted
Ascent from vales of brambled grass.

II.

In these mountains ruled supremely
To-tó-ko-nú-la, valiant, brave—
With wisdom strove he, as was seemly,
To guard the right, from wrong to save.
One morn he stood, adventure daring,
Upon the highest peak, with pride
Invoking unseen fate, ne'er sparing
Dangers that threatened to betide;
Beneath the o'erarched heavens, speaking
As if a king upon his throne,
He, from his love of venture, seeking
Some strange phenomenon unknown.

III.

"Great Spirit! grant me mystic power
To change all things I now behold!
With might give wisdom, wondrous dower,
New glories in my deeds to fold!
Give lofty life this habitation!
Magnificent argentine sweep;
Give mighty mountains to this nation!
Give treasures richest for our keep!"
Lo! while he spake soft shimmers lightly
Illumed the cliffs of boulders high,
With warmer iridescence, brightly,
Like promise bows that span the sky;

IV.

Forth from irradiance advancing,
In answer to his uttered prayer,
A vision, glorious, entrancing,
As if his destiny to share,
Appeared beside him on the mountain,
Most beautiful, transcendent, fair,—
In robe of sheen, like foam of fountain
That pearls the dewy morning air;
Her silken tresses falling lightly
Waving with rays of golden hue,
Like sunshine shone, but far more brightly,
Threading her folded pinions through.

V.

O'ER her pure brow seraphic, twining,
Were bands of bright encircling flame—
Halos of saintly nimbus—shining
The while she spake her wondrous name.
"I am Tisáyac! For thy glory
The Light of light awardeth thee
To fill the measure of thy story,
Its meed of mystic destiny."
While speaking, saintly smiles were wreathing
Their tender lights of truth divine
From azure eyes, her bosom breathing
The holy love that hearts enshrine.

VI.

The Indian chieftain, charmed, delighted,
Awoke with warmest love aglow;
Wild words his adoration plighted
With pride exultant bliss to show;
Excitedly his arms extended
The angel presence to embrace;
With wooing thoughts his praises blended
Fleeter than words could fill their place.
Tisáyac's smile at once o'erclouded
His earthly passion to disprove;
Her glorious presence, saintly-shrouded
In mantle of divinest love.

VII.

She shrank from mortal touch, arising
On outspread wings, she soared away,
The bold young brave with shock surprising,
Who stood bewildered in dismay:
Never before had he been slighted
Or baffled in his wild desire:
His soul subdued by wishes blighted,
Bedazed with disappointment dire.
His searching gaze o'er earth and heaven
Met only chaos everywhere,
Till speech his palsied tongue was given
To utter this pathetic prayer:

VIII.

"Oh! banish not this new-found pleasure,
Feast of my eyes! to gaze on thee,
My light of life! my peerless treasure!
My meed of glorious destiny!
By the Great Spirit sent, thy beauty
Intoxicates my heart with love,
That truly vows with dauntless duty
Its adoration fond to prove.
What angel grace! What tender glances!
Thy beauty, beaming rosy light,
Awakes desire, my soul entrances
With whispered words of fond delight.

IX.

"Stay! Why arouse my mind from sleeping,
With proffered smiles, ecstatic bliss?
My heart once cold, now madly leaping,—
What doom was ever like to this?
Vanished? alas! all things seem dreary;
Naught in this world will please again;
Of life's oppression I am weary—
Still hushing heart-throbs born of pain.
Tisáyac! light of air world, hover
Awhile above my burning brow!
Comfort this grief of mine, thy lover
Who wafts adoringly his vow."

X.

Of noble presence, God-like bearing,
With youth, ambition, warm desire,
Bravest of braves, his dauntless daring,
With eyes of eagles' gleam and fire;
Like one distracted, ever seeking
The angel through wild mystic ways,
To-tó-ko-nú-la wandered, speaking
Or singing sad, disjointed lays.
Neglected lands began to languish,
With weeds and brambles overgrown;
The chieftain's spirit racked with anguish,
His mind by maddened thoughts o'erthrown.

FREDERICK DIELMAN

XI.

"Tisáyac! I will follow ever
Along the way I saw thee fly!
Thou canst not by this torture sever
Love that will live if I must die!"
Then he a glacier steep ascended
From crag to crag, soon disappeared;
Dominion thus neglected ended
In ruined harvest, worthless, seared.
Soon through the cañons mimic measures
Along the dingled caverns deep,
With waking voice invoking pleasures,
Unceasing murmurs softly sweep.

XII.

"To-to-ko-nu-la!" like a whisper
Sighed on the stilly mountain air
With rippling hush, like laughing lisper
Awoke the echoes everywhere.
As with a ray of light from heaven,
Tisáyac, the fair angel, came;
A glow of glorious radiance given
With music of the chieftain's name.
She gazed upon the desolation
Desertion brought that vast domain,
On barren blight,—drear devastation,
Since madness crushed the chieftain's reign.

FREDERICK DIELMAN

XIII.

Her tears like precious dews of Hermon
Fell on the soil beneath her feet;
Fair flowers awoke, with silent sermon
Wafting odorous incense sweet.
At her command were boulders riven,
The granite parted where she stood;
The melted mountain snows were driven,
Rushing in falls with force of flood.
A lovely lake she formed of waters
Pure as the mirrored azure skies,—
Reflecting dusky native daughters,—
Now forms the source where rivers rise.

XIV.

Thus the Yosemite, that wonder
Of fabled scenery sublime,
Was given falls with voice of thunder,
And purling streams with ceaseless chime.
A grander majesty enhances
The scene, and pines soft shadows fling,
Their tasselled foliage—elfin lances—
In bristling range of battle bring.
Forests of mammoth trees embracing
With massive boughs magnificent,
Climbing wild vines whose interlacing
Frail tendrils lights to shadows lent.

XV.

Most wondrous charms of beauty blended
Along the overarching skies,
Grand granite monuments extended
O'er fissures, falls, and domes that rise;
Their needle shafts so sharply pointed,
The Sentinel imposing stands,
Like sacred edifice anointed
As offertory of the land,
For nature casts her fairest treasures
Before the altars offered there;
The birds are chanting songs in measure,
With sweet responses everywhere.

XVI.

Bold, granite boulder range was given
Where towering cliffs imposing stand,
Deep mighty falls o'er ledges driven,
By ceaseless breezes ever fanned;
The wild birds sang in tuneful measure,
Blossoms bedecked with odors sweet
The fertile fields, exalting pleasure
Of vernal beauties rare, replete.
To-tó-ko-nú-la, then returning
After a long and fruitless quest,
Of fair Tisáyac's visit learning,
With wilder phrensy was possessed.

H.BOLTON JONES

XVII.

Awe-struck he gazed upon the changes:
Sublime appeared the mountains grand,
Dense foaming falls, arcaded ranges
That towering rose above the land.
Upon a lofty peak he places
A likeness of himself in stone,
With hunting-knife that outline traces
Now to the gazing pilgrim shown.
And while he worked, his sad song singing,
He'd pause, with an attentive ear,
Again to hear Tisáyac winging—
His weary heart with life to cheer.

SONG.

Here will I trace
My saddened face,
Upon this stone,
For thou hast flown
To Spirit Great.
Tisáyac! thou
With seraph brow,
Irradiant—fair—
Naught can compare
To thee, my fate.

Hard is this stone;
But I have known
A harder death
With living breath—
  My doom is brief;
It follows still
Thy witching will
That wooed, that won
And left undone
  A hapless chief.

Delve, delve I now,
O'er face and brow
In earnest zeal;
My harder steel
  Deepens each line.
Tisáyac, see!
My love for thee
Aids to impress,
For thy caress,
  This face of mine.

XVIII.

And while he sang the birds were singing,
Flitting from crag to crag the while,
With fluttering pinions softly winging,
As if his sadness to beguile.
When finished, he would proudly linger,
Hoping Tisáyac would approve:
Smiling he'd say, with pointing finger,—
"Behold! a likeness of thy love!"
Thus day by day would he endeavor
The angel presence to invoke:
Echoes, with sweetest murmurs, ever
His words in mimic trills awoke.

FREDERICK DIELMAN

XIX.

One eve, while balmy hours were sleeping
And zephyrs hummed a lullaby,
The drony waters ever leaping
Through misty sheen from boulders high,
While falling floated airy measure
Of plashes musically sweet,
Like fabled pearls on threads of pleasure
In gauzy warp and woof complete,—
Then through the fairy veil, appearing
On graceful fall, like finest lace—
One moment, his fond fancy cheering,
He saw Tisáyac's angel face.

XX.

No word with her pure presence spoken,
But bows of promise shimmered there,
Soothing the heart, with hallowed token
Of spirit love with her to share.
Quick as electric flash from heaven,
By hope inspired, fond fancy cheered
Thus to behold the presence given,
The brave sprang forth and disappeared.
"The Bridal Veil" is ever flowing
Tisáyac wore her nuptial night,
That hour with iridescence glowing
Appear two rainbows, beaming bright.

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